Delivering
Our Housing Future FORUM

Brisbane Forum Report

9 May 2014

Report prepared by RI Australia

UDAL
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Spinal Injuries AUSTRALIA
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COTA
QAI Queensland Advocacy Incorporated
Australian Network for Universal Housing Design
Griffith UNIVERSITY

QDN Queenslanders with Disability Network
QUT
Ri
QUEENSLAND ACTION FOR Universal Housing Design

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABCB	Australian Building Codes Board
APS	Access to Premises Standards
BCA	Building Code of Australia
BCC	Brisbane City Council
CGV	Commonwealth Games Village
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRPD	Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992
LHA	Livable Housing Australia
NCC	National Construction Code
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDS	National Disability Strategy
NFP	Not-for-Profit
NPWDACC	National People with Disability and Carer Council
PWDA	People with Disabilities Australia
RIA	RI Australia
UDAL	Urban Design Alliance of Queensland
WHO	World Health Organisation

1.   INTRODUCTION

The *Delivering Our Housing Future* forum was held at the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland on 9 May 2014. The forum was convened to discuss strategies for Australia to meet its universal housing design needs by 2020. It brought together representatives from industry, government, research and the community to examine why self-regulation is falling short of delivering targets, and to explore the feasibility of a regulatory approach for change. The forum gave participants a constructive opportunity to shape the nation's housing future.

Opening house-keeping remarks were made by **Forum Facilitator**, **John Stalker,** (Program Officer for COTA Queensland), with a formal thanks to all forum sponsors (see Appendix A) for their support in enabling participants to attend at no cost. Live Captioning[1] was provided for the morning panel sessions of the event. The Forum qualified for Continuing Professional Development for eligible architects participating.

Acknowledgement of the Jaggera people (south of the Brisbane River) and the Turribal people (north of the Brisbane River) was made by **Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Kevin Cocks AM.** Kevin outlined that the delivery of Australia's universal housing design needs is an essential component of constructing a society which is inclusive of all members, and this requires input and expertise from a range of professionals. Whereas the overwhelming majority of Australians want to age in place in their own homes, live independently and active engage in their communities, this experience is denied a high proportion of people with disabilities because of the chronic shortage of accessible and affordable housing. The human right to housing is articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and places an obligation on all Australian Governments, and all facets of society to collectively achieve. A legislative and treaty framework needs commitment from all individuals as citizens to bring about an equitable and inclusive society.

Biographies of Panel Presenters are at Appendix B.

2.   PANEL 1 – EQUITY & INCLUSION

2.i   Legislative & policy imperatives
Why equity & inclusion through housing design is necessary
Dr Jane Bringolf, ANUHD/COTA NSW

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[1] Live Captioning is correctly known as Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART)

The philosopher Michele Foucault proposes that; "*People know what they do. They frequently know why they do it. But what they don't know is - what they do, does*". Starting from this premise we are able to closely examine the consequence of policies and actions. In the context of housing, we could extrapolate to propose that: "*builders know how to build houses, they know why they build them - to make profit - but what they don't know is, what their houses do, in terms of inaccessibility*". But blame for lack of accessible housing does not rest entirely with the builders or even the building industry in isolation.

Some may believe that everyone gets a fair go, but we cannot rely on goodwill to ensure equity. Even legislation and regulation are insufficient tools on which we might rely to ensure human rights are met.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) has many positives but has been an inept instrument for ensuring equity of treatment and social inclusion across all facets of society. More recently, we have used the CRPD to underpin the principles of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (NDS). The CRPD carries obligations States Parties to enhance their legislative framework in order to realise the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities encapsulated in this and other Human Rights Conventions.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a good example of the principles of the Convention put in practice. Both the NDIS and the consumer-directed Aged Care Reforms will progressively enable individuals to exercise choice and control over their lives. On a similar theme, the World Health Organisation (WHO) promotes active ageing through design of age-friendly cities which enhance community engagement. All levels of government do recognise that design for an ageing population is essential for individuals, society and the overall economy.

In Australia, in 2012-13, approximately 150,000 new dwellings were built, comprising about 1.5% to 2% of total housing stock. Extrapolation of this figure over 10 years would mean 1.5million additional houses by 2025. Failure to require compliance with accessible design, such as in the Livable Housing Design Guidelines, has meant a lost opportunity in improving the universality of housing stock, and fails to create an impetus threshold which would change design and building of renovations.

Existing legislative frameworks have been inadequate in driving necessary changes to housing design. A universal right for housing seems to stop at the front gate. Indeed the Australian Access to Premises Standard (APS) failed in this aspect of regulation, leading to accessibility of housing being strongly linked to economic ability to purchase, rather than linked to any inalienable human right.

This seeming polarisation of rights and regulation can be viewed in terms of Mutual Advantage theory[2]. Ethicist Lawrence Becker proposes that we have to be pragmatic about rights in a market-based economy, where everything is negotiable. Basically, each party is expected to bring to the negotiating table something of benefit for the other party. In the case of the house building industry it can bring greater equity and inclusion for all citizens through introducing universal design principles.

But what do people with disabilities and older people, bring to the table? For many it is assumed nothing. However, in reality they are bringing the potential to reduce health costs; increase employment for themselves and their carers; reduce dependency on others, and to reduce home renovations paid for by the public purse. In short, they bring a generalised good for society that spreads to all citizens including house builders. Nevertheless, negotiating this philosophical landscape has some contradictory aspects. We have on the one hand the noble notion of justice and fairness for all, yet on the other, an approach to theories of justice in the western world which are based on notions of mutual advantage.

Becker notes these theories of justice are largely constructed by those who are not themselves disadvantaged and therefore possibly stand to gain or lose accordingly. Livable Housing Australia (LHA) attempts to straddle that divide between social justice on the one hand and the market economy on the other, all the while hoping to bring about mutual advantage. The interpretation of mutual advantage in this context has no punitive component, but attempts to restore productive reciprocal relationships.

Similarly, under the CRPD, educative tools are used to drive a paradigm shift in the concepts of justice. But this relies on voluntary absorption and adoption of messages and will not necessarily override vested interests. LHA has embarked on an educative discourse, producing explanatory materials and processes for implementing universal design in housing. LHA cannot be held responsible for the market failing to deliver the right to access. We have now come full circle to return to Foucault and can argue that the house building industry knows what it does and it knows why it does what it does. However, I think that there is now evidence that those in the industry also know what they do, does.

Margaret Ward in her Robert Jones Inaugural Oration on 8 May outlined the 4 groups who survey the current failure of the house building industry. Firstly there are people who have power to understand the impacts of social inclusion and do nothing; secondly, the people in the house building industry or the thousands associated who also do nothing to change the status quo. In the third group are those who take

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[2] Becker, L.C., 2005. "Reciprocity, Justice and Disability", *Symposium on Disability*, Ethics, Vol 116 No.1, University of Chicago Press, p 9-39.

individual responsibility by building a dwelling which acts as exemplar, and the fourth group are those who take collective action to intervene and call to account those people in power who do nothing.

The legislative framework already exists. Policies and programs cite universal design. The National Dialogue for Universal Housing Design uses a model of mutual advantage based in good faith that the current market would adjust in time to deliver the Livable Housing Design Guidelines. Sufficient time has now passed for education and voluntary action to bring about changes. Now "*it's time to deliver*".

What else needs to be done? Who is going to take responsibility for any actions? Hopefully, this forum's workshop will lead us to the next steps.

2.ii Equity & Inclusion through urban design
How does equity and inclusion through housing design fit in the broader city-making policy?
John Clarke, Board, Urban Design Alliance, Queensland

John Clarke is a Board member of the Urban Design Alliance of Queensland (UDAL), a loose collection of urban designers who deal with issues of city-making. Clarke's multiple perspectives on how urban design fits with universal housing in the Queensland context arise from work as an architect with urban, house and residential design experience.

Urban design is about making cities. One definition is to look at the design of the total infrastructure from landscaping to transport networks, the arrangement, appearance and function of all the city's parts including its interaction with its catchment region. In other usage, the term is used to describe a specific project.

In the context of the forum a broad definition is that all of us are city-makers, including politicians who impact on the design through laws, regulations and policies; to project managers, engineers, and the householders, all of whom interpret and act within the constraints of the laws and policies. Often one stakeholder's sphere of interest is at odds with that of others, and design of the public realm does not take private housing design into account. Importantly, through urban design, it is possible to significantly influence the economic and the socio-\-economic success of a locality.

So we need to view housing as contributing to the broad urban design process. Similarly if we apply universal design principles to the greater product it is logical to also apply universal design attributes to housing. For our purposes, we can consider the application of universal design principles for housing as a continuum, and contrive to design for 90% or 93% of the population. The actual percentage of population that can realistically be catered for is constantly debated.

As an example, in 2012 about 80 designers in UDAL developed a manifesto defining features of universal design. It says: "*good urban design does not discriminate, individuals are not the same, people are old/young, infirm as well as active and healthy; they have different needs at different times in their lives/situations. Good urban places are places for all people, regardless of infirmity or ability*" and "*..respects the needs and aspirations of the community*". The protocol lists about 130 key points for good urban design and, of particular note, champions accessibility. "Good place" uses existing topography to advantage, and considers issues of physical safety, space for movement and gathering together, as well as the contribution of overall aesthetics to our experience of the place. Perceptions of safety as well as its reality are important, as is maintaining scope for people to engage creatively with their environment. In addition well-designed urban environments are easy to navigate on foot, by wheelchair, pushing a pram or wheeling luggage. They encourage social interaction and physical activity, thus promoting a healthy lifestyle.

From the macro to the micro, urban designers need to consider both the broad structure of a city as well as the level of a house entry step. The evaluation processes take into account density mix, and the juxtaposition of various types of land-use or housing including consideration that some housing/building types may require a larger footprint. Existing topography may affect accessibility. Urban design must be concerned with the public-private interface, e.g. planning pedestrian and vehicle access impacts the design of the dwelling.

In fact, housing could be considered as a public infrastructure in its connection to the public realm. Urban designers need to make the design of a city deliver universal housing, rather than a lesser product of housing. Urban designers are well placed to recognise the need/opportunity for universal housing, and to educate for raised awareness of this need.

The National Urban Policy[3]; is the overarching government strategic policy framework for cities in Australia and is supplemented by other national goals, including healthy spaces/places and the Green Building Code of Australia. It underpins the UDAL manifesto. These policies are impacted at more local level by other considerations, e.g. the Brisbane City Council (BCC) strategic vision[4] for the city includes that: "*that our communities will be healthy and active and for all residents of all ages/abilities will be included in the life of the city*". The Brisbane Visions 2031 documents have eight major themes[5] including a policy on

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[3] *Our Cities – Our Future, A National Urban Policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future* May 2011, http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/pab/urbanpolicy/
[4] Brisbane City Council, *Strategic vision,* http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-strategy/vision-strategy/brisbane-vision/our-active-healthy-city
[5] Brisbane Vision 2031 documents: http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/about-council/governance-strategy/vision-strategy/brisbane-vision/brisbane-vision-2031-documents

accessibility covering the visitability of apartments and building common areas, thus being consistent with Access to Premises Standards (APS) and Building Code of Australia (BCA) requirements. Each level of Queensland government, e.g. Economic Development Queensland (EDQ)[6] has a connection with the overall objective of good urban design. Other our organisations – social housing companies, Brisbane housing companies, Uniting Care, have their own statements about universal housing and its interaction with urban design.

Once again we have principles and policies about universal design, connected through strategic national thinking. All agree that good urban design includes the provision of universal housing. But the challenges remain on how to integrate many different urban usages, how best to use diminishing available space, whilst maintaining maximum accessibility; how to provide housing incorporating universal design which is well-situated, affordable, sustainable and flexibly adaptable to changing occupancy requirements. The influence of changing political environment is a constant challenge. How do we prioritise? We have set ourselves a goal to invest in all facets of good urban design. Culture depends on champions, for ideas, leadership and momentum, and in the area of universal housing, Clarke says that UDAL is one of those which takes its role seriously.

2.iii Equitable, Inclusive housing:
Research with University of the Sunshine Coast
What do older people want and need from housing design?
Phil Smith (Architect, Urban Design Associate Director, Sunshine Coast Manager Deicke Richards)

Smith uses the principles of equity and inclusion which enable us as humans to sustain ourselves and underpin how we organise ourselves in cities, towns and neighbourhoods, to address the question of what older people want/need from housing design.

At the UN Habitat's 7th World Urban Forum held in Medellin Columbia in April 2014, the Medellin declaration[7] recognised "*Equity as a Foundation of Sustainable Urban Development*". Forum proceedings outline the need to re-think our cities to make sustainability and equitability twin goals. Smith's recent work has focussed on working with seniors, through seniors-related projects for not-for-profit (NFP) care providers to examine how city design might positively support the aspirations and abilities of these older citizens.

For Smith, the idea of inclusion is a fundamental part of the process of designing and delivering equitable spaces. The only way to design and build equitable places is to

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[6] Economic Development Queensland, *www.dsdip.qld.gov.au/.../economic-development-queensland.html*
[7] World Urban Forum proceedings: http://unhabitat.org/7th-world-urban-forum-medellin-declaration/

consult and work with the people who are to inhabit them, and make sure the agreed design is delivered. In 2011 Dr Claudia Baldwin, PhD candidate, Karen Osborne, University of Sunshine Coast and Smith collaborated with two groups of seniors (from Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast), supported by a range of industry and government partners, over a six-month period.

The seniors were asked a series of questions about what they wanted in accommodation and neighbourhood. They participated directly in the research through a "Photo Voice" technique[8] taking photographic images to record their answers. The images and ideas were workshopped and preferences arranged into a series of principles. The research focussed on in-fill housing preferences, including the broader issues of neighbourhood as well as just house design. Researchers were surprised at the complex level of understanding the seniors' groups demonstrated of difficult issues of urban design and neighbourhood.

What do seniors want?

At a neighbourhood level the seniors wanted: accessible and safe walking paths and walkways; housing with close proximity to services and facilities; outdoor environments with access to green space; independence supported by public transport and connectivity; pedestrians safety in neighbourhood centres, and safety for older motorists in neighbourhoods and centres. They wanted to participate and contribute to a shared sense of a community which provided access to young people. They wanted design and networks which supported their perceived issues around personal safety.

At the housing and accommodation level: they wanted human-scale built form with high visual amenity. This meant low to medium-rise and universal design and this latter was a non-negotiable attribute. They wanted sustainable design, beyond consideration of energy or carbon footprint, to include meeting basic physiological needs in building design – natural light to see better, breezes to better regulate their brain temperature, rainwater, because it tastes better. They wanted both private and shared outdoor space; they wanted a versatile use of space to ensure that flexibility was there to support their ageing; they wanted a design that minimised maintenance, and they wanted security that reduced the perception of vulnerability.

With the same groups, the research team co-designed a series of housing typologies in different neighbourhoods on Sunshine Coast and Brisbane and felt they delivered the principles outlined. One was a shared garden house facility, co-located across four co-joining backyards. This design enabled the seniors to unlock the equity of their house, and use that money to set up a shared care arrangement in the shared environment. A second typology was a three-storey courtyard building with units

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[8] Photo Voice methodology: http://www.photovoice.org/whatwedo/info/photovoice-methods-and-process

around a central courtyard that brought both sunlight and breezes into the units. Critical in this second typology was the scale of the units themselves. Living in collective groups of 15-25 was regarded as the maximum. The seniors in the research team were antagonistic to the idea of body-corporates.

Certainly architects have a responsibility to design the neighbourhoods and housing that people want. It is possible to design good housing but be unable to make people choose to live in it. This leads to the question of 'needs' versus 'wants' and designing to address expressed principles developed by the prospective occupants. However, meeting neighbourhood design principles is beyond the scope of individual architects. Thus a key moment in the research came when it was necessary to insert the typologies that had been designed into an existing neighbourhood, that of Corinda in Brisbane. Smith et al were able to place the typologies close to the sorts of services that the seniors said they wanted, using both vacant and redeveloped sites. As a result they have coined the term "ageing in neighbourhood" as distinct from "ageing in place". This approach delivers the preferences articulated by the seniors groups and also delivers a robust place that can deal with a changing policy/environment, including providing better opportunities for older persons' employment. With universal housing principles embedded, there will be a robust housing stock when the proportion of aged people increases. Future levies to pay for aged care services will be more efficiently used if we have more holistically designed neighbourhoods that are based on ageing principles.

This research, supported by other international findings, showed that location is really critical to the quality of health and well-being for seniors and, rather than house design itself, is the single biggest determinant of the health and well-being of seniors as they age.

In summary, seniors have an understanding of the importance of location in their housing and how it affects the quality of their ageing. From designers and architects they also need policy that delivers diverse and adaptable typologies in neighbourhoods that allows citizens to age in place in familiar environments – i.e. ageing in neighbourhood. The principles of universal housing are absolutely fundamental to the approach of ageing in neighbourhood. Thus the conceptual framework for universal housing actually needs to be expanded and applied in a structural design sense to our neighbourhoods.

2.iv Barriers and impediments for people with disability in private housing design
What do people with disability, their families and friends want and need from housing design?
Professor Jill Franz (Research leader, Design for Health and Social Inclusion Research Collective, Queensland University of Technology)

This presentation addresses the question of what people with disability, their families and friends, want and need from housing design. A previous speaker made a distinction between 'wants' and 'needs', and whilst this cannot be comprehensively addressed in the forum timeframe, it is a focus of Franz's presentation.

Franz's response to this question is largely informed by recent research undertaken for the Federal Government exploring issues of access to private housing for people with disability, including consultation with families, friends and various people working in the disability sector. It highlights some explicitly stated wants, and some implied needs.

The model of disability that informed that project encompassed an amalgam of social and medical models, with an appreciation of the complex interaction between features of the person's mind/body and features of the society in which he/she lives. A resounding finding of the research is that people with disability want to live an "ordinary life" – even mundane if by choice. One respondent to the research, a mother of an adult son with intellectual disability, said: "*it's just him being treated as normal as possible...If people respect you, you feel so much better about yourself and we all want to be respected, don't we?*".

The desire for an ordinary life, with barriers removed so people with disability can get on with living, has been reiterated by the National People with Disability and Carer Council (NPWDACC). What does it mean to live an ordinary life? It is one where basic rights are met. People With Disability Australia (PWDA) emphasise that: "*all human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. Consequently, access to adequate housing is essential for the realisation of many other human rights. It may be essential for the right to life and survival, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to home and family, the right to security of the person, and the right to freedom from abuse, neglect and exploitation*". These statements and research point to the complex role played by housing – yet we don't accord it the emphasis that it deserves.

What does it mean to have an ordinary life? It means to be able to participate in and contribute to family and broader community life. Some of Franz's research was undertaken in supported accommodation, i.e. group homes and cluster housing. Participants felt that these environments precluded people from fully participating in community and exercising their right to choose their place of residence with whom they live on an equal basis with others as outlined in Article 19 (Living Independently and being included in the community) of the CRPD.

Housing policies have used a medical model of disability, focussing on rehabilitation and specialist service provision, including accommodation specially designed to cater to specific functional needs. People with disability want to live in normal-

looking housing. The research showed there is a siloed approach to housing for people with disability that assumes and maintains a disability space. For people to live ordinary lives, housing provision should be aligned but not conflated with other disability support services, and allow for normative housing careers, including aspirations of home ownership, security of tenure and wealth creation.

Essentially, people with disability want a home, not just a physical space. There is an inextricable link between a person's well-being and the manifestation of home. Homes are within social networks of people who have significance to and influence on each other. In contrast many housing solutions for people with disability arbitrarily group and place people, compromising the development and maintenance of natural social networks. A house needs to be a home without the trappings or signs signalling an institution.

What are the design implications of an ordinary life? It has to be a mainstream approach with basic design, construction and location that enables accessible, flexible, inclusive housing for everyone, and requires the least costs for adaptation to meet the specific needs of a person with a disability; where a person can live in a dwelling of choice and visit others in the community.

Chenoweth[9] has written on the difference between having a mere presence in the community to the detriment of both the individual and the community, in contrast to being a socially included participant. Housing design that adopts a whole of person, person-and-family-first approach, will also recognise how housing and communities are homes and places; and will inspire and support the visions and aspirations for a good life of both the individual and family. The design will be for more than a mere physical environment that supports functional needs. We need also to look at ownership and tenancy options that recognise the various stages/situations of life, facilitating career pathways, security and wealth creation.

Housing needs to be affordable. Aesthetically designed access features need to be the expected norm and inclusive of the widest spectrum of disability. Research respondents valued having the least intrusive-looking accessibility features.

In conclusion, current attempts to address the shortfall in appropriately designed and located housing have led to piecemeal, selective, even segregated responses with very little opportunity for people with disability to survive, let alone thrive. Irrespective of the type or level of disability, people with disability have a right to choose their place of residence on an equal basis and for that house to facilitate full inclusion, participation, and contribution in family, work and community life. Housing

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[9] Chenoweth, L; and Stehlik, D; Implications of social capital for the inclusion of people with disabilities and families in community life,
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360311032000139467#.U4rfbtGKBD8 – check?

access and community access need to be understood as issues for society as a whole, demanding a mainstream rather than disability-specific response.

At the very least, this should entail that all new and extensively modified housing meets minimum accessibility requirements with incentives for the housing industry to build to Gold or Platinum LHA accreditation levels. Ideally LHA should invite the building industry to go beyond these levels and raise the quality benchmark even further.

3. PANEL 1 - DISCUSSION

3.i It was suggested by a questioner, in reference to the quote from Foucault, that builders may not understand what they do, and that negotiated mutual advantage for all parties is a positive concept.

In response it was proposed that this has to be reconciled with regulation imposed through policy, and in which builders cannot fully foresee what advantage accrues to them, or value some nebulous future societal advantage for all. The mutual advantage theory is not attached to a direct exchange of goods on a personal basis, but accrues to a more generalised societal advantage. An example is of the use of tax money for general benefit and equity is spread more widely. Builders themselves may also eventually need to occupy just such an accessible house that we advocate for them to build. In fact, in Britain, when part M of the Building Code was introduced, houses which incorporated the required minimum visibility features[10], sold more quickly because they were perceived to be more spacious, the costs of the Code requirements were £400 rather than first-envisaged £5000, and the required downstairs toilet was regarded as a positive feature, so that the regulated 'good' became a 'good' for the buyer/occupier.

3.ii A questioner proposed that there is a challenge in designing for whole neighbourhoods, let alone having good design within dwellings themselves. Affluent developers and local governments may not embrace these concepts, e.g. a recent suburb development in Townsville left occupants extremely isolated. Although universal design features were incorporated in the townhouses themselves, developers had removed trees and omitted the inclusion of transport. The tree removal meant that the sporting facilities were unused because of the heat, and there was minimal opportunity for development of community spirit.

The example highlights our very convoluted process of design assessment during the approval process. Professionals work with the developers; others

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[10] Part M of the Building code UK requires natural lighting features in all houses

on developer staff work with accountants and banks, and the agreed collaborated plan then goes to the local authority for assessment. Various council directorates give analyses and then pass back to the start for adjustments. If this iterative process commences with poor design, it's very hard to get it back on track. Good design is therefore a requirement to start with. Therefore, from the outset, it is essential that local government, local politicians, bureaucrats, officers and planners are aware of the holistic design concepts discussed.

All players have responsibility, collectively, to call for a higher quality of housing. Over the last 100 years, our communities have become more fragmented largely due to being designed around car use. We have forgotten how to structure denser communities, and how to conduct ourselves in denser communal living space. The question raises the imperative for consideration of housing infrastructure to be integral to neighbourhood structure. It's too easy to blame local government and the developers. We also have to get a little bit more demanding about what we expect in a community development.

3.iii A questioner asked from more information on the proceedings of UN Habitat 7th World Urban Forum. These are available online. A progressive approach to city design and restructure was a prominent theme, and may provide answers as to how we achieve changes, how we deliver infrastructure in different ways. Our policy-makers, Australia and particularly in south-east Queensland, should be thinking about innovations raised at the forum, to design for climate change and re-urbanisation.

3.iv The seemingly recurring theme of blaming builders and developers for bad design was raised. It was proposed that they are simply providing what they are contracted to build. Similarly suppliers deliver what is requested. In addition, the developer heads a proprietary company and is thus obligated to make a profit. Another significant problem is that the eventual occupiers have little power especially when they are the recipient of public housing or through other organisations.

We need a strategy in which the end-user can be better informed and represented; which promotes accessibility and liveable housing ideas to the marketplace, so that developers respond to market forces which will deliver a profit. We also need good architects capable of delivering good design.

There are examples where design processes fail. An extremely expensive house in which a range of accessibility features have been incorporated, may fail if there has not been holistic understanding of the needs. A single item may have been left unaltered, e.g. standard 820mm doorframes used. This

will then become the limiting feature which then prevents the wheelchair user for whom the house was designed from entering or using any of the other accessibility features incorporated.

Another problem is that the mass market high-volume houses are not architect designed. We accept that there are many ordinary house construction features which are universal, or standard, in design – doors and frames, windows, roof trusses, plumbing fittings, etc. This is very different from having wide acceptance or understanding of universal design principles, even though we already use universal design principles in specialised housing for seniors or people with disabilities. Resistance to putting universal design features in everyday housing remains. A major reason is that consumers do not envisage their future needs. Therefore, we cannot appeal to them, and market forces remain weak.

The marketing of new suburbs or housing developments plays into this mindset. Developers market a rosy lifestyle, and the buyer does not want to visualise any different version of themselves, let alone one that is aged or has disability.

3.v   A questioner asked the panel to consider challenges raised by the need for good design in rural and remote areas.

The main focus of the panel presentations was on urban design in metropolitan areas. In rural and remote areas all factors are changed, and the more remote the area the more challenges there are for socialising, accessing the community or being able to get suitable mobility equipment. Universal housing design needs to also fit that situation. The cost of materials is high and supply is uncertain, features like ramps are subject to greater stresses and have a reduced life. Attracting builders familiar with universal design is difficult. These challenges are very applicable to Aboriginal communities.

Community expectations are different in regional and remote areas. In the city, people want the footpaths to be level whereas in the country, people's desire is to just have a footpath. The design focus on urban areas needs to change because there tends to be higher concentrations of older people and people with disabilities in many rural communities. In both situations we need to ensure that both the houses and the connecting infrastructure have universal design features, and people need the right assistive equipment to suit their environments.

For a local government or an Aboriginal land council, the procurement process for materials is also challenging, and unfortunately the cost

benchmarks may have been generated in an office at a distant location. Cost levels may be established within a bureaucratic model for all of the State, and to stay within a contracted amount the builder has to make ultimately detrimental adjustments. This points to the need for greater understanding in bureaucracy of the need for universal design to be applied to remote communities and to urban neighbourhoods. It also necessitates adjustment to be made for the higher costs and challenges in the remote setting.

4.   PANEL 2 – HOUSING

4.i   **Voluntary approach to the provision of equitable & inclusive housing**
How is Livable housing Australia progressing towards the 2020 aspirational target?
Andrew Aitken, Executive Director, Livable Housing Australia

Aitken's presentation contributed to the day's discussion and to help inform the how LHA is committed to the transformation of the market.

Some context about the genesis of LHA was given. In 2009 there was a conversation at Kirribilli House[11], known as the Kirribilli dialogue[12]. It brought together a broad range of people from industry, government, consumer and advocacy groups to work out how universal design could be promoted in Australia's housing. All participants came there for the same reason, recognising that housing being provided throughout Australia was not meeting the needs of a great many people, and to devise a way of changing the situation. It was a genuine partnership, so people around the negotiation table dropped their official stances and talked openly on a common theme – "how do we get a greater number of universally designed homes"?

LHA was born out of this and developed as an organisation to help transform the industry. Kirribilli Dialogue discussions arrived at a point where it was agreed that a voluntary mechanism would change the housing industry much faster than a regulatory one. Around the table, the building industry said that they would resist and fight any moves toward compulsion and regulation. They represented their members' interests and their members had said "*we don't want further regulation red tape; we will fight this*", and that stance has not changed. They said, "*If it is done voluntarily, we will work with you; we will help you to transform the market voluntarily.*" LHA was established around the middle of 2011 to further the principles of voluntary change in the market. Since then, LHA has published the Livable

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[11] Kirribilli House is the official residence of the Australian Prime Minister in Sydney.
[12] National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design – Strategic Plan, http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/government-international/national-disability-strategy/livable-housing-design/national-dialogue-on-universal-housing-design-strategic-plan?HTML

Housing Design Guidelines, explaining the 16 simple things that you can do to the design of a house to make it more liveable.

LHA has also coined the term "liveable", rather than "accessible" or "flexible" or other terms. Market research found all those other terms to be a bit of a turn-off, "*scary, not something for my house*". But when asked about a liveable house – everyone wanted one. LHA deliberately spelled it differently – "livable". It has been said this was done to enable creation of a Google alert for easier media tracking of its usage; but in fact, it was done to differentiate a product. Livable is thus a distinct product rather than universal, but it comes from the same basis. LHA's role is to work with everybody to further the application of the Guidelines and their take-up in the marketplace.

LHA does that by providing leadership and driving best practice through the Livable Housing Design Guidelines; certifying new dwellings that comply; and now offering certification for existing dwellings that comply. There are plenty of dwellings that comply, that LHA does not certify. Aitken talked about why that's an important matter not to be overlooked.

LHA provides advocacy; champions the uptake of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines with industry as well as with government; provides education (for matters like hanging a door that is 870 millimetres wide versus hanging one that is 820 millimetres wide). Similarly acquiring the know-how to have level entry to the front door of a house is a big issue for a lot of builders. Their understanding is that it is quite clear in the Building Code that a step is required into all homes in Australia, whereas in reality, we know this is not true. LHA education programs are focused on such matters where help and education is needed.

LHA only delivers education where there is a market failure and no-one else does it. Alternatively, LHA provides the education materials, e.g. to industry associations, MBA, HIA, building designers' associations, the institute of architects, so that they can deliver the information.

LHA is trying to identify the barriers to and remove them. Cost is a barrier, so if the cost of attending education is a problem for builders, it is delivered at no cost. If organisations choose to charge their members to deliver the education internally, LHA believes it is their prerogative, that it can be good for them to make money out of it and to be able to set a price that suits them.

What are LHA goals? The quality mark labels, Silver, Gold and Platinum, are what is provided in the LHA certification scheme. There are two stages. The [first] goal is for all houses to achieve at least the Silver level of our Guidelines. LHA certifies both designs and completed buildings. This is very important because in Australia both stages have been regulated requirements for a very long time.

In Australia, houses are being provided all the time that comply with Australian Standards for accessibility, adaptability and visibility, but it's really, really difficult to find them in the marketplace. Our certification scheme fills a gap by providing a certificate that can be transferred with the sale of a dwelling that says "*this house is livable*". For example, the New South Wales Government has 40,000 homes in their public housing portfolio and they believe between 10 and 20 per cent of them would comply with our minimum Silver level guidelines. You would say, "*Why isn't it closer [*to an exact figure*]?*" In reality, the Government can't tell [on paper] which houses are compliant, which ones are accessible so the estimated proportion remains loosely "about" 10% to 20%.

The NSW Government is therefore interested that LHA can provide certification of existing dwellings as well as new dwellings that comply with LHA requirements, and issue a certificate that can be used with the title of the house in a sale. There are changes in thinking occurring.

LHA believes that the design information in their Guidelines is not actually the hard part, even though it is important to articulate it. The difficult part is to tell the market [i.e. the home buyer] that it works, that it's there; that they can choose to buy livable homes, rather than non-livable homes.

LHA is also working with PriceWaterhouseCooper accountants to identify the market value of a livable home versus one that isn't certified. In addition LHA is working with realestate.com, domain.com, to show the LHA certification levels in their online databases, so that the terms "livable", "Silver", "Gold" and "Platinum", are searchable features. It will take considerable time before we see this mainstream market transformation.

Thus, LHA work is not just about the 16 design elements as set out in the Guidelines. The first eight elements are what we talk about at the Silver level. Gold level [uses] the first 14, with a few more dimensions on some of the basic elements; and Platinum level requires the full 16 elements. The Guidelines are available as an app. As of 8 May there have been over 1250 downloads of our app. since it was released last year.

LHA has also delivered the hard copy of the Guidelines to every architecture practice that is registered with the Australian Institute of Architects; made thousands of them available to building designers around the country (recognising that architects don't build the vast majority of houses). In additions, there are 3,500 downloads of the PDF documents from the LHA website every month. Industry interest is growing. Enquiries to LHA include: "*can you tell me what the brand of that light switch is that you have shown in your guidelines, because my electrical wholesaler out here in central Queensland tells me they are not available?*" These

are major changes to our market. So, now in Emerald, in central Queensland, they know that the Clipsal Prestige P 2000 light switch is available and that it doesn't cost any more.

What has LHA achieved since it started? It has had a very significant uptake:
- 294 dwellings are certified, i.e. [at] the design and/or as-built stage.
- 500 more are on an LHA list of registered [dwellings], seeking certification.
- In addition LHA has identified over 1850 dwellings that have made public statements about complying with at least the Silver level.
- There are thousands more [dwellings which would comply] but where public statements have not been made.

A builder spoken to in central Queensland, said, "*Look, we are just doing this in all our homes. We think it makes a lot of sense*". Builders ask very simple and practical questions which indicate that the Guidelines are being used extensively.

There is formal accreditation of registered assessors, with a list published on the LHA website, to give people choice as to who can assess whether or not their design/building complies. LHA encourages building certifiers/surveyors to become registered LHA assessors, so that they can combine doing a Building Code compliance check with the LHA check. This uses the existing professionals and existing resources in the community.

There is growing awareness, mainly through uptake by key developers. Stockland has been the first to get on board and has given monetary support to enable LHA to further their work. Targeted conversations are being held with other large developers, including Lend Lease, Grocon, Australand. It is likely that in the next couple of months a number of organisations committed to supporting LHA [through corporate partnership or supporting membership].

Usually, at the first meeting with developers/builder organisations, their questions relate their steepest development site. They ask, "*How on earth can we make an accessible entry into this development we are putting on the side of a cliff?*" LHA's response is, "*Don't worry about that. Let's talk about the 93 per cent of dwellings that you deliver that are on flat sites, that are easy to do. Let's do those ones first.*" Industry should be given a bit of time to work out processes for the difficult sites, that today might necessitate an ugly ramp whereas future innovation might devise an elegant bridge.

At present there is enough know-how to address waterproofing a level entry – every shopping centre has one; it's a requirement of every office building. Thousands of

accessible dwellings are built every year. We just need to mainstream that information. There's a lot of work left to do but LHA has made good progress[13].

4.ii   Perspective of the housing industry
What are the opportunities and challenges for the housing industry?
Paul Bidwell, Deputy Executive Director, Master Builders Queensland

Bidwell noted that the national organisation (Master Builders Australia) is a signatory to the Kirribilli Dialogue. Master Builders is a federated model, so that member bodies do not necessarily endorse actions of other members. Bidwell mentioned twice in his presentation that there was a degree of coercion brought on MBA in order to get their signature on the Kirribilli Dialogue.

Master Builders Queensland (MBQ) represents the interests of builders and contractors, big and small across the State, including both housing and commercial businesses. Members range from listed companies, to major manufacturers like CSR, to a bloke with a dog, a phone and a Ute, as well as concreters, tilers, etc.

In order to understand the MBQ perspective, you really need to have an understanding of the structure of the industry and how the supply chain works. In some respects it is simple – with consumers/developers; designers/architects; builders (mostly relying on a subcontractor model), suppliers of materials and services, and finally the financiers who also play a crucial role.

Bidwell presented the perspective of the builders and the subcontractors. Depending on the size of their business and their business model, builders can have both a developer and designer role. He gave an example of the Yarra development being done by Lend Lease, where there is good design and excellent development along a western corridor with a lot of connected green space (although this positive interpretation of the project is necessarily subjective).

Lend Lease are developing land packages which are ultimately sold to builders who then negotiate with owners and build houses. In most cases builders are negotiating directly with clients who have the power to simply change builder if dissatisfied. This is in contrast to the "lifestyle marketing" of developments referred to earlier in the day where people buy a ready-built product. It's important to understand that difference. Devine, a listed company based in Brisbane, take on all three roles – of developer, designer (probably using architects) and builder. Plantation Homes, one of about 40 major project home builders in Queensland, complete approximately 500-600 homes per year using their own architect or designer-drawn plans, and

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[13] Further information is available from Andrew Aitken, or Executive Director Amelia Starr, via email at info@LHA.org.au.

relying on subcontractors to build with completed homes are sold direct to consumers.

It is also important to recognise that the housing industry, i.e. builders and trade contractors, is highly regulated and all must be licensed. All licensees have to meet certain capital requirements in order to operate. Allowable turnover (not actual turnover) is capped by the government, as regulator, through the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. Actual turnover is reported on the website and is publicly available, along with a record of any misdemeanours in relation to building so that a record of any defective work it's on the website for all consumers to see. The Building Code spells out in great detail how the buildings must be built in order to be safe. It's fair to say a primary objective of the Building Code is about safety. The Queensland development code itself allows for differences within the State. Builders actually like regulation, which for an industry association you might find is a bit perverse, but certainty gives reassurance and comfort.

MBA Queensland is in favour of regulation, because compliance rules are clear and achieved through the building certification process. Such regulation gives surety to the many small business operators who comprise 85% of MBQ builders.

The Kirribilli Dialogue set targets – 25% of new houses with Silver level accreditation by 2013, 50% by 2015, 75% by 2018 and 100% by 2020. Paraphrased, the elements required for Silver level[14] accreditation are [PPT slide]:
1. level path from the street entrance/parking area to the dwelling entrance,
2. one step pre-entrance into the dwelling,
3. easy access around the parking area,
4. wider corridors/doors allowing easy access,
5. easy access to a ground floor toilet,
6. hob-less shower,
7. re-enforced walls around toilet shower bath to allow subsequent fitting of grab rails, and
8. handrail on one side of the stairways.

In 2013, 29,343 dwellings were built so that about 7000 should have had Silver level accreditation. This year in Queensland, we will commence about 32,000 houses and units. Because there is no obligation to meet these elements under the Building Code, and no separate LHA inspection of completed dwellings, we have no idea of whether this target was met.

Bidwell noted that Margaret Ward's PhD thesis on inclusive housing[15] gave a comprehensive and accurate assessment of the issues from the builders'

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[14] For detail, see: http://livablehousingaustralia.org.au/design-guidelines/

perspective, and was sympathetic to the challenges they face. In interviews with MBA and Housing Industry Association (HIA) members, revealed emergent themes about impediments to implementing the Silver level standard. These were (in order of importance):

1.   Lack of mandated requirements.

2.   Lack of buyer demand.
   Buyers do not envisage its future usefulness for them.

3.   Consumers' priorities.
   Master Builders' research indicates that consumers' priorities are price and quality of fittings/fixtures. For example, they will choose a better quality marble bench top over better insulation, even though the latter will save on power bills over the long term. Consumers are not persuaded by the logic of future needs, and ultimately builders have to deliver what clients want.

4.   Confusion about the purpose of inclusive housing.
   Inclusive housing is not yet mainstream, so that awareness-raising by LHA and by Ward and team are essential.

5.   Additional cost.
   On some slopes or if it's not an open plan design, particularly the level entry requirement, there will be a cost.

   During a time of drought, a previous government introduced a requirement for a rainwater tank. This added an additional $6000 to construction costs. Analysis by the competition authority showed the measure was not cost effective and the requirement was discontinued. Cost effectiveness needs to inform our thinking when we consider mandating the accessibility requirements.

6.   Innovation inertia.
   Despite cost pressures in the home building industry, there is very little, and slow take-up of new materials and new building techniques, even though adoption of such innovation would give a competitive advantage.

7.   The focus is on the demands of the initial buyer.
   This is linked to the lack of buyer demand.

8.   Pressures of affordability.

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[15] Ward, Margaret L. (2013) *Inclusive housing in Australia: a question of responsibility and distributive justice.* PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology

MBQ research shows that consumers want to minimise their upfront costs. Clients calculate the deposit they can afford and then want the largest possible house that deposition amount allows them to buy.

9. Natural conditions.
   Getting level access in Paddington and Red Hill can be at enormous cost.

10. Technical limitations.
    The step-free entrance and the hob-less showers present problems. The building regulator, QBCC, publishes the top 10 defects across the State annually. Over 5 years at least, problems with water penetration in showers/bathrooms and with transition at entry have been in that top 10. Builder state that the requirements create problems for them.

Bidwell proposes that these are some of the issues with the take-up of the LHA Guidelines.

Turning to the opportunities, Ward's research identified 7 themes which would overcome those impediments:

1. The need for higher authority.
   Research demonstrates that you have to mandate these changes.

2. Use of a consultative process towards regulation.
   This is a logical extension of the first theme and delineates the timing of it.

3. Take leadership and demonstrate new practice.
   Although there is growing awareness, and information available, uptake of any innovation with new products and practices is slow.

4. Lack of traction.
   There's disconnect, and no coherent, positive message that succinctly explains the costs versus the benefits of these changes.

5. Explanation of the extent of the task.
   There is a need for good communication and education.

6. Improve professional practice.
   Hob-less showers can be built and not cause problems. The fact that they do, shows a disconnect somewhere.

7. Encourage demand at the point of sale.
   This implies providing incentives for builders and developers.

Research exists which suggests that if the broader community want accessibility elements, then one way to achieve this outcome is to include this in the housing/Building Code. The industry is quite comfortable with rules/regulations. For example, the 8th element in Silver level accreditation[16], handrails in stairwells, were introduced into the Building Code in 2012 without problem. However, introducing some of the other elements can carry significant cost.

In conclusion, because introduction of all 8 elements will involve a cost, the housing industry has very strongly rejected mandating the package as a whole. In fact, trying to deliver all 8 elements in every new dwelling in Queensland would carry enormous cost. There is a middle ground to be found.

In closing, Bidwell related one of Ward's anecdotes:
> *A house is being built for wheelchair access, design is agreed, they are going to build it. Concreter goes to lay the slab; looks at the plans and says "this dill of a designer has not put a step in. I had better fix that". The builder turns up and there is a step, and the concreter is very proud of himself, saying "I fixed that problem for you".*

So with all the good will in the world, [incorporating the LHA design elements] is a tough ask.

4.iii   Guidelines, Standards and Codes
What is required to develop an appropriate standard?
Allison Scotland, National Sector Manager, Standards Australia

Scotland is the National Sector Manager for building and construction at Standards Australia. Her brief was to give information about the requirements for developing an appropriate standard.

By way of background, Standards Australia is a not-for-profit organisation, which is independent from government. Although Standards Australia has some permanent employees, a team of more than 7,000 volunteers contributes to developing Standards. Compliance with an Australian Standard is voluntary unless it becomes incorporated into regulation, legislation or in a contract. A Standard specifies the minimum objectives of performance, safety and quality. Some Standards are developed specifically for legislative adoption; some for contractual agreements; and some are merely guidelines.

The core idea of development of Standards is to reach a "consensus" position of best practices and principles. Taking "consensus" to mean the "absence of any

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[16] Element 8, LHA Design Guidelines: *Stairwells are designed to reduce the likelihood of injury and also enable future adaptation.*

sustained opposition", Standards Australia ensures that representatives on its volunteer teams have a balance of different stakeholder viewpoints, and essentially works towards a mutually agreed compromise position.

Thus Australian Standards are a tool and can be an alternative to regulation. Whilst there are Standards incorporated into the National Construction/Building Code, other Standards can be created to be used as a guide by the marketplace without having to resort to regulation, thus bypassing reliance on government processes. Using the committee consensus process means there is a continual evolution of standards as new technologies and practices arise.

Every Standards Development project needs to start with a proposal. Each proposal needs to demonstrate principles of net benefit. The benefit can be in having a net positive effect in a particular area, e.g. social and community impact; public health and safety impact; improved competition, or environmental benefit. These factors are used to assess the validity of each proposal. Approximately 70% of Standards development processes are resourced by Standards Australia, using in-house project managers and methodologies, coupled with the input of the volunteer committees. There are limited resources, so that the assessment of relative net benefit of each proposal is essential.

The main committee within Standards Australia working on Standards for disability, access and mobility is ME64. The ME64 committee has been in existence for quite a number of years and many people at today's forum, including Michael Fox and Jane Bringolf, have contributed and been instrumental in changing building industry principles and practice. Not yet perfect, the access and mobility Standards will continue to evolve. An inevitable limitation is that the ME64 committee is comprised of volunteers whose time and travel commitments place inherent limitations on individuals' input. This inevitably extends the initial projected timeframes to achieve outcomes.

The ME64 committee works on a couple of Standards, principally AS1428, which is incorporated into the BCA. A current project on Wayfinding, Part 6 of the AS1428 series, is nearing release so that the public comment phase can be completed before the 2015 review of the APS Standards. Chronologically, a second project is to develop/revise the fixtures and fittings component of the AS1428 series; and a third is in housing design for people with specific disabilities.

Once a Standard is revised, Standards Australia undertakes intensive work with industry and communities to educate all stakeholders about the changes, what affect they will have and where to look at examples.

Since AS1428 is now incorporated into the BCA, adhering to AS1428 specifications means that a building will be "Deemed-to-Satisfy" the Code requirements on

assessment. There are many competing forces which determine whether a Standard becomes a mandated regulation, including the political will of a government. Currently the ME64 committee has been advised that accessible housing is not a consideration in the 2015 APS review.

The Office of Best Practice and Regulation has stringent guidelines for ultimate adoption of standards into the National Construction Code (NCC). Standards Australia can help meet these guidelines and streamline the process to get a standard mandated.

When the "housing for people with specific disabilities" project starts, accessible housing standards may be incorporated, to be ready for future general adoption. Standards Australia is committed to developing standards that are user-friendly for industry and that can also be tailored for adoption in a mandated framework when opportunity arises. Scotland stated her commitment to working with stakeholders for future standards development projects.

Ultimately, Standards Australia is only one player in the entire regulatory spectrum.

4.iv   Regulatory approach
to the provision of equitable and inclusive housing
What are the benefits and limitations of a regulatory approach?
Lindsay Walker, Executive Director, Building Codes Queensland

Walker thanked organisers of the forum, noting that it provided an opportunity to re-examine his thinking about the regulation of buildings.

In the context building construction regulation, the starting point is guided by safety and the statistics for trips and falls. This problem affects members of the community. A personal example was cited of an elderly neighbour who had a fall, and was on the floor overnight unable to contact anyone. Personal stories bring home the importance of safety issues.

Regulation has had a marked impact on increased safety levels for the community, e.g. mandating the use of seatbelts. Such precedents show why/how regulation can work. Since we can see the rationale for housing accessibility, but acknowledge lack of action, it is useful to look at the barriers to regulation.

Regulatory change in the construction industry in Queensland and nationally is primarily governed by economics. The Queensland Government has nominated the construction industry as one of the 4 pillars of the State's economy. House building accounts for a large proportion of employment. There are pressures for Housing Queensland to support construction of affordable, public and social housing.

The key word here is "affordability". Queensland statistics show that there is a difference of many thousand dollars between the cost of construction and the amount that someone on basic wage can afford to pay in rent/mortgage and that therefore [social housing prices] have to be subsidised by government. In consequence there is scrutiny of every item to be included, and there is a cost to each step of the introduction of any particular requirement, from certifying its design to final certification. Earlier in the forum, Bidwell cited that a saving of $6000 was achieved in total costs by removing the compulsory installation of rainwater tanks. This figure may be only about $5000, but the reduction in red tape also has a dollar value. These amounts are important to a first home buyer.

In addition, the uniformity of building requirements achieved through having the NCC, saves the country approximately $1billion annually, and enables builders to have mobility across the country. However, some differences in construction requirements still exist between jurisdictions and localities. If these could be reduced, there would be an additional billion dollar savings. This returns us to the question as to why we do not mandate immediately.

There are sensitivities to every cent in the cost of a building, so that any small changes can meet with significant resistance. For example, changes to the NCC for 2014, included an amendment which requires interconnected smoke alarms where more than one smoke alarm is required.[17] Shown to be a cost negative requirement, it nevertheless stimulated one major stakeholder to mount a concerted campaign to relevant Ministers and the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB). We also know that the cost of retrofitting any feature far exceeds the cost of initial installation. However, deciding on any element to be regulated, we need to find features which have the greatest net benefit for the smallest dollar or labour outlay.

Applying this reasoning to Silver and Gold level livable housing, the elements which have that characteristic of small initial cost versus high cost for retro-fitting are element 4[18] – increased door width for easy access, and element 7[19] – essentially a few extra noggins of "2 x 4". In the latter case, the materials involved are insignificant compared to the waste seen outside at a building construction site.

Walker hypothesized that any proposed change, such as the above-mentioned elements, brought to the ABCB would need to clearly demonstrate in a cost-benefit analysis that the cost of inclusion is significantly less than the overall cost to the

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[17] http://www.buildingcommission.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/14879/Changes-to-the-2014-NCC.pdf: *Where more than one smoke alarm is installed in a Class 1 building or a sole occupancy unit of a class 2 or 3 building, or Class 4 part, those alarms must be interconnected.*
[18] LHA Guidelines Element 4: *internal doors and corridors facilitate comfortable and unimpeded movement between spaces.*
[19] LHA Guidelines Element 7: *the bathroom and toilet walls are built to enable grabrails to be installed in the future.*

community. In the current context, this approach would address only 2 of the 8 elements of Silver level accreditation.

To return to the original question of the benefits and limitations of regulation, theoretically, a government can summarily make a political decision to mandate a new regulation. The benefit would be to get immediate outcomes. However, in the context of the 16 livable housing design elements, this is an unlikely occurrence because the cost-benefit analyses have yet to be proved. As a strategy, a compromise would need to be made to select 2 to 3 elements. For example, the requirement for handrails [at accessible egress][20] was incorporated seamlessly into the NCC Series in 2013.

If you rely solely on a mandatory, regulated outcome, Walker's view is that only those elements where the cost of retro-fitting is prohibitive will be considered. Simpler elements, like straight door handles [rather than knobs], or changes to electrical wiring will not be considered because there's no difference to cost.

In car manufacturing, innovation and market-driven demand has brought increased safety features without regulation, e.g. reversing camera systems as a safety feature, and pre-collision sensor systems to stop imminent collisions. Regulation can only ever be part of an overall solution. Thus, there is a need for the LHA agenda for voluntary uptake of accessibility elements, to sit in parallel with BCA regulations. The LHA activities are essential for providing that broader context which will move the entire community to where you want to be.

4.v   **Report from the Housing 2020 Forum in Sydney:**
"How do we reach the 2020 target?"
Where to from here?
Michael Fox AM, Chair, RI Australia

Michael Fox, Chair, RI Australia
RI initials refer to "rights and inclusion". RI Australia[21] is part of an almost 100 year old global organisation, advancing rights and inclusion in a wide range of access and equity areas. Housing is one part of a very big global agenda.

Fox was the first Chair of the AS1428 committee and very involved in incorporating that into Ordinance 70 in the 1980s, followed by the BCA and negotiations about the Access to Premises Standards (APS) in the last couple of years.

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[20] http://www.buildingcommission.com.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/11377/BCA-2013-slide-show_VBA-August-2013.pdf: *Handrails in a required exit serving an area required to be accessible, must be designed and constructed to comply with clause 12 of AS 1428.1*
[21] Rights & Inclusion Australia, http://www.riaustralia.org

From 2004-08 Fox was President of RI Global, based in New York and very active in all the negotiations about the CRPD, through to the adoption and ratification of the Convention. Currently Fox's work as an architect and access consultant includes considerable experience in the issues around accessible housing.

RI Australia has a five-year involvement in this housing agenda, conducting previous annual forums in Sydney, Townsville and Canberra, with proceedings published on the RI Australia website. As a rights-based organisation, RI Australia' two national themes are housing and advancing the rights of Indigenous Australians with a disability in urban, rural and remote environments. RI Australia's policy is for all events to be as inclusive as possible, and is the sponsor of this Forum's real-time captioning.

Fox's presentation covered three broad areas. Firstly, the RI Australia/ANUHD Housing 2020 Workshop held in November 2013 in Sydney; secondly, an outline of relevant legislation, and thirdly, suggested accessible, livable housing strategies for the afternoon workshop.

In all negotiations and meetings, in all Fox's UN work, consultations are fundamental. At the time of initiating the CRPD negotiations in New York, advocates emphasised the necessity of having delegations which included people with disabilities as representatives.

This set a precedent at the UN and meant that every delegation had to consult extensively with their disabled community, their organisations, and spokespeople. This meant that each government immediately had to raise its awareness, and by the time they got to New York, partnerships were developing between government and the disability community.

For these and other reasons, the CRPD has been the fastest ratified UN Convention. The CRPD was adopted in 2006 and ratified by Australia in 2008. Out of about 200 countries on earth, over 140 countries[22] have already ratified it. The consultation model has been a very big part of that success. Working together is a key part of today's meeting as well, finding the best outcomes to all these housing issues.

One fundamental problem of today's forum is that we are preaching to the converted. We have not engaged with the media. Telling the story, whether of general interest or controversial, is an essential part of raising awareness in the wider community. If we cannot engage the media and the wider community, we are not going to succeed with our awareness and housing programs.

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[22] For details of ratification of CRPD, see. http://www.un.org/disabilities/

The Housing 2020 Workshop in Sydney last November included about 70 delegates, and was managed by RI Australia and ANUHD with our sponsor Stockland. This was a consultative workshop with about a third government, a third industry and a third consumers. Similar to today's program, the interactive workshops agreed clear outcomes and recommendations. The overwhelming recommendation was that we should move towards mandating accessible housing in national, mainstream housing through the BCA.

Incentives are needed to help LHA expedite its program to educate consumers, designers, and all people in the building industry. As an architect, it is common to go on site to find that plan specifications have been ignored because the builder has reverted to habitual inaccessible methods of construction and fittings.

We need to simplify design codes, reduce their number, complexity and the different packages of information – including LHA guidelines, AS4299, AS1428, Standards Australia, State regulations, local council regulations. Accessible and livable design is not difficult and requirements are straightforward, yet we have made it complicated. We all need to work together to resolve this, so we get better housing in Australia. The November **Housing 2020 forum** also included real-time captioning and the Workshop report is available at the RI Australia website.

Access and equity related legislation in Australia is based on the DDA. However, in relation to Housing, clause 23[23] limits the requirement for access to premises to those that the public can enter and use. The DDA may need to be amended to include private buildings like houses, but current advice from the Attorney-General's department is that housing may not be included in the 2015/2016 APS review.

Originally, when AS1428 was developed in the 1980s, as one of the first standards, it included housing, public buildings, private buildings and existing buildings. Despite 10 years negotiating its application across this wide public/private spectrum, governments only endorsed access to new public buildings. AS1428 Part 1, is an extraction from the original AS1428, and specifically applies to new public buildings. So today, we remain in the position of trying to progress the same agenda of access to both public and private buildings.

AS4299 was adopted by Standards Australia in 1995, with both Bringolf and Fox on the drafting committee. Some people say that approval of legislation/standards takes a long time, but the timeframe is really dependent on "political imperatives". The endorsement of the adaptable housing Standard, AS4299, is closely linked to Australia winning the 1993 bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sydney. Many of us became involved and said, "*What an opportunity. Let's make the Sydney games as accessible as we possibly can.*"

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[23] Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Clause 23,
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/s4.html#premises

Under this political imperative, within 2 years we developed, and Standards Australia accepted, a complete new standard, AS4299.

Fox's company Access Australia was the access consultant for the Olympic Village and AS4299 was used for the whole of the village. It was a great process and all stakeholders were positive. Mainstream visitable and adaptable housing was provided, and local authorities now usually say "provide 10% adaptable".

This is fundamentally irrational because years later, because there usually are no records about which units are adaptable. The UK has legislated for 100% adaptable housing, and that's what we should be doing as well.

As Chair of the CRPD Article 9 committee, Fox helped make sure "housing" was included. As UN delegates from all over the world were debating the issue of accessibility, we all agreed housing must be included – and that is why it is in the Convention. Thus the CRPD *requires* access to housing, so by ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the Australian government has made a legal undertaking to "make housing accessible". Yet we have not done it.

Political imperatives under the Howard Government delayed the APS. Under the Rudd Government the CRPD was ratified, we adopted the APS and created LHA within a couple of years. Unfortunately the APS still only includes class 2 and 3 residential buildings, and only requires access to the door of a unit, not within the unit. Further amendment is needed to both the APS and BCA to provide comprehensive access **to** and **within** Class 1 and 2 residential buildings.

Andrew Aitken has told us about the status of LHA. RI Australia commends LHA for bringing government and industry together. This is an important step towards better housing in Australia.

The important 2015/2016 APS review currently appears to omit housing from the agenda. Endorsement of APS changes requires agreement by the Australian Government, Attorneys-General and Council of Australian Governments (COAG) before the ABCB can progress amendments to the APS and BCA. A central Abbott Government policy is for *Boosting Productivity and Reducing Regulation*[24]. In fact under Principle 2 "regulation should be imposed only when it can be shown to offer an overall net benefit".

Accordingly RI Australia has made a formal submission to the 'Cutting Red Tape' group and Treasurer Joe Hockey, recommending that APS housing access legislation will meet this overall net benefit principle and significantly reduce long term aged care costs by increasing ageing in place.

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[24] Coalition Policy *Boosting Productivity and Regulation Reduction*, July 2013, http://lpaweb-static.s3.amazonaws.com/Policies/ProdPolicy10Jul13.pdf

Housing strategies for discussion at our workshop this afternoon relate basically to whether adaptable and livable housing should be mandatory or voluntary. At the excellent Robert Jones Oration last night, Margaret Ward provided a very relevant discussion about the issue of social injustice and housing. She identified four groups that cause social injustice:

1. Government – when it knows there is a problem and does nothing about it;
2. Industry – when it knows about the problem and similarly does nothing about it;
3. Individuals – that do whatever they can to address the problem in the personal sphere; and
4. People that take political action – hopefully us.

Bringolf noted today that 150,000 houses are built in Australia every year and yet Aitken said LHA, set up in 2009, has only certified 294 dwellings to date. We need to find a better solution to this critical issue. The basic alternatives available are either to continue with the voluntary approach or move towards mainstream regulation through the BCA[25].

LHA has raised awareness and involvement of stakeholders. Hopefully this process will assist in moving from the voluntary approach, with industry support, through to mandatory mainstream legislation. A consultation process is fundamental.

We all have to find ways to work together and find better outcomes. As has been said many times today, our overall goal is better housing in Australia.

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[25] The following Andrew Aitken comments were received after the Forum:

I think I heard you say in your wrap up that LHA started in 2009 – in fact it was started in October 2011. You made a reference to 294 dwellings being delivered since 2009 is not good enough. In fact, we only started certifying projects in 2013 and the 294 was since then. We also note that the 2020 target wasn't about LHA certified dwellings, it was about dwellings delivered. There have been many more dwellings delivered since the Livable Housing Design Guidelines were released than those certified by LHA. We believe that the certification process we offer is very important, but note that many, many dwellings are and will continue to be delivered without LHA certification. We also note that the basis of the 25% aspirational target established for 2013 was that all public housing in Australia would be designed to at least the Silver standard. This was supported by all Australian States and Territories at COAG. There is subsequently no evidence to suggest that this target has not been met.

LHA is developing more ways of collecting data about the uptake of the Livable Housing Design Guidelines in industry and will continue to make that data available.

We are concerned however when the data is mis-represented in public forums such as this and hope that the official transcript will be adjusted to note the inaccuracies in your statements.

5.   PANEL 2 - DISCUSSION

5.I   What percentage of a volume-built house is profit?
Bidwell and Smith agreed that builders would aim for 10-20% margin.

5.ii   Given that the winning of the Olympic Games bid, caused rapid adoption of AS4299, what opportunities are there for changes associated with the construction of the Commonwealth Games Village (CGV) on the Gold Coast. Is there going to be universal design and 100 per cent livable?

Lindsay Walker verified that a specific Queensland Development Code has been set up to deal with housing arrangements for the CGV along with commercial arrangements to deal with livability to cater for Paralympians/athletes coming, but did not have figures to verify if there was a requirement for 100% livability. Aitken added that the mix of livable design has been decided but not formally announced. Discussion continued regarding the commitment, or otherwise, to 100% livable design for the CGV.

5.iii   In relation to engagement with the media – a forum on accessibility held on the Sunshine Coast in 2013 got no response to any press releases. In contrast, when an accessibility award was given to a local brothel, there was a plethora of media coverage. Perhaps a more controversial stance needs to be taken.

5.i.   How much resistance to adoption of new techniques is due to lack of knowledge about how to change practices, and lack of easily used suppliers (like Bunnings)?

In response, Bidwell theorised that the situation is more complex, and depends somewhat on the personal experience of the builder, e.g. a builder faced with renovation of a Paddington terrace house on 8.5 meter frontage who contemplates including wider corridors and ramps, will regard the regulations as unrealistic, when perhaps only 4% of houses present such challenges. Bidwell expressed the cautious opinion that the reaction of such builders could change if it was seen that a regulation included some leeway for discretion of its interpretation. Currently, if lobbyists insist on incorporation of all 8 elements of the LHA Silver Level Guidelines, industry opposition will continue to be strongly negative.

5.v   With regard to the housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, what consideration is given to the appropriateness of construction? For example,

the housing development at Woorabinda[26] [south of Rockhampton], or Torres Strait Islander housing, are on the foreshore and therefore open to the elements of the ocean. In contrast, there is Aboriginal mainstream housing on the mainland and inland. Across different communities houses have to withstand vastly different environments, e.g. how do builders cope with building appropriate, affordable and accessible houses on sand?

Fox's response was that Indigenous Housing is a major focus of RI Australia. Key processes include: respect, consultation, and ownership. RI Australia works closely with its members, First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDNA) and Malpa (an organisation which works through young Indigenous people to strengthen communities). There are some core considerations, e.g. in most Indigenous language, there is no such word as "disability". Indigenous culture is a culture of respect; it's about people's different abilities, whereas disability is a Western construct. Thus, we have so much to learn from other cultures and particularly our Indigenous communities. Many of our Indigenous members have told us about ineffective housing experiences around Australia, fundamentally through lack of consultation. The houses are often designed in southern cities, put on a truck and installed on community. The housing is not appropriate, there is limited consultation and no ownership opportunity. This results in a lack of respect and continuing problems.

5.vi   Participants made two further points around marketing and leverage. Firstly, the introduction of the NDIS was achieved not through regulation but by a community campaign. The Every Australian Counts campaign brought the public with it, so that when an increase to the Medicare levy to fund a Scheme that most people will never actually need was introduced, 76% of people were in favour. At the start of the campaign, respondents to market surveys did not envisage any personal relevance of the NDIS to them, but ultimately there is recognition that the NDIS is of benefit to the whole country, not just the person with a disability. Secondly, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) that administers the NDIS, becomes a leverage point because there will be NDIS funding for house modifications.

The Forum has already emphasised that billions of dollars could be saved from retro-fitting costs by introducing a mainstream solution of regulating for accessibility when houses are constructed. In addition, use of the media and having a concerted campaign on private housing accessibility deserves further investigation.

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[26] Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council, http://www.woorabinda.qld.gov.au/

Fox noted that on the ABC Lateline[27] program on 8 May 2014, former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, raised the idea of a *longevity levy* to supplement the superannuation income of people over 80, because we can now anticipate living 80 to 100 years, whereas the current superannuation scheme was set up for an anticipated 20 years in retirement from 60 to 80. The main aspects of this fund would be income support, aged care and accommodation.

A summary of the Recommendations of the forum is at Appendix C.

(No warranties express or implied as to the accuracy of the material contained in this summary are given by the author and the author will not be liable for any error, misdescription or for any other reasons.)

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[27] ABC Lateline, 8 May 2014, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-09/paul-keating-calls-for-longevity-tax-to-supplement-super-income/5440986

APPENDIX A – LIST OF SPONSORS

Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland	ADQL
Australian Network for Universal Housing Design	ANUHD
Council of the Ageing	COTA
Deicke Richards	
Griffith University	
Queensland Action for Universal Housing Design	
Queensland Advocacy Incorporated	QAI
Queenslanders with Disability network	QDN
Queensland University of Technology	QUT
RI Australia	RIA
Spinal Injuries Australia	
Standards Australia	
Urban Design Alliance Queensland	UDAL

APPENDIX B – Biographies of Presenters

Alphabetical Order, from transcript

Andrew Aitken

Andrew Aitken from Livable Housing Australia is an electrical engineer with over 20 years' experience in the building industry. For the past five years, Andrew has worked with the Green Building Council of Australia as the Executive Director of Green Star, the sustainability rating systems for buildings and communities. Andrew has been recently appointed as the Executive Director of Livable Housing Australia where he's responsible for the certification of projects that comply with the performance levels outlined in the Livable Housing Design Guidelines. He's also responsible for Livable Housing Australia's education and training programs.

Paul Bidwell

Paul Bidwell is Deputy Executive Director of Master Builders Queensland and responsible for the association's housing policy agenda. Paul has 18 years of private and public sector experience in policy planning and analysis in Queensland and has qualifications in property valuation as well as urban and regional planning and business administration.

Dr Jane Bringolf

Dr Jane Bringolf (ANUHD, COTA New South Wales) has worked in the community sector for more than 30 years, specialising in aged and disability services in both rural and urban settings. While she was the CEO of the Independent Living Centre of New South Wales, Jane was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 2004 to study accessible environments and universal design in the United States and Europe. Jane's continuing interest in inclusive design and social inclusion then led her to complete her PhD studies asking why industry seems reluctant to take up universal design principles in housing. Her published papers focus on the built environment, housing and assistive technology.

John Clarke

John Clarke (Urban Design Alliance Queensland) has over 20 years' experience in the architecture and building industries and has worked in a diverse range of projects including public architecture, housing, health and urban and site master planning. He has been a long-time advocate and promoter of sustainable practices in the delivery of good design, including safe design and design for access. He is a practitioner of universal design with specific experience as it relates to urban places, health facilities and social housing. John has advised and supported the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design and its Queensland counterpart in their work to increase the adoption of universal design principles in housing.

Michael Fox   AM

Michael Fox is an architect, planner, access consultant and human rights advocate with an involvement in access and equity since the 1980s. He is a director of Access Australia and related architectural practice, Michael Fox Architects. Michael Fox is an accredited member of the Association of Consultants in Access Australia and Chair of RI [Rights & Inclusion] Australia.

Dr Jill Franz

Jill Franz is Professor and Head of Discipline for Interior Design in the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology. Jill is also director of the Design for Health and Social Inclusion Research Collective which explores the relationship between the environment and health, well-being and social justice. She has just completed a Federal Government project exploring issues of access to private housing for people with disability.

Allison Scotland

Allison Scotland is the national sector manager at Standards Australia. In this role she's responsible for stakeholder engagement and standards development work in the building and construction sector. Allison's career has led her from the public sector, working for Sydney Water and New South Wales Health to the private sector where she managed a number of small/medium enterprises in the plumbing and roofing industry sector.

Phil Smith

Phil Smith is an associate director with Deicke Richards, a multi-disciplinary design firm with offices in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. Amongst his many achievements, Phil recently co-authored a report, the Infill Development for Older Australians in South East Queensland[28] which analysed the housing preferences of older people in south-east Queensland. The research won the 2012 Queensland Division Planning Institute of Australia award for cutting-edge research and the 2013 Australasian Research Award of the International Association for Public Participation. Phil is the Sunshine Coast Chair of the Australian Institute of Architects and sits on the Sunshine Coast's Council Urban Design Advisory Panel.

Lindsay Walker

Lindsay Walker is A/Executive Director of Building Codes Queensland, within the Queensland Government Department of Housing and Public Works. His role includes overseeing the recently implemented 'Red Tape Reduction initiatives' for home owners and building and construction industry.

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[28] Baldwin, C; Osborne, C; and Smith, P; Infill Development for Older Australians in South East Queensland – An Analysis of the Preferences of Older People in the Urban Environment, http://www.usc.edu.au/media/3748/Infill_Development_Report_Part1.pdf

APPENDIX C – Summary of Recommendations

Delivering our Housing Future Forum
Thursday 9 May 2014
Summary of recommendations for action*

Keep doing
- Continue to advocate vigorously for enhancements to BCA based on what we know will deliver
- Keep all signatories of the Kirribilli Dialogue to account for their commitment to the aspirational target of all new housing reaching Silver Level by 2020 by:
  - demanding accurate and timely data and progress reports
  - promoting work of LHA, in particular, that Livable Housing Design is easy and doable, and promotes inclusion and sustainability
- Continue to educate, communicate and raise awareness with all stakeholders

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Stop doing
- Stop aligning universal housing design to people with disability and older people only
- Stop expecting the housing industry to self-regulate
- Stop accepting the inaction of government authorities with regard to the lack of inclusive housing

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Start doing
- Actively lobby for regulation; and
  - consider an incremental approach beyond building costs (cost/benefit analysis for health and aging in place
  - find champions with a good story stressing the economic imperatives
  - get leverage from the NDIS campaign
- **Encourage Livable Housing Australia to continue to:
  - convince home owners to make the economic investment in livable houses while they are working
  - consider incentives/levy
  - seek market good prototypes
  - influence and education in schools and universities
  - encourage certifiers to become accredited LHA assessors
  - encourage local governments to include LHDG in ordinances.

**While the participants did not specifically identify LHA to do these tasks, they are within their remit. I suggest that our best strategy here is to encourage them to continue rather than try to emulate them.

Kevin Cocks, Anti-Discrimination Commissioner (Queensland), who hosted this forum, committed to host a meeting for the sponsors to consider these recommendations.

If any participant is interested in taking action, they could:
- Contact one of the sponsors and offer support;
- Contact Livable Housing Australia at info@lha.org.au ; or
- Take action independently.

List of responses
Keep doing
- maintain the rage
- maintain the dialogue with builders and designers
- find the law makers and power brokers
- supporting LHA work and promote across all sectors
- get commonwealth to promote as a fed initiative
- raising awareness across professions and general public
- holding parties to account for Kirribilli agreement (2020 targets) with accurate and timely data and progress reports
- continue to advocate for enhancements to BCA based on what we know will deliver
- good communication flow with all stakeholders
- keep educating
- get grass roots design involvement
- educating & advocating to all the key players – government, consumers, builders
- use practical examples and stories
- promoting work of LHA
- promote good design in terms of environmental, accessibility, sustainability
- acknowledge the power imbalances between the parties
- promote it as easy and doable
- global approach
- market prototypes
- keep consulting
- promote research

Stop doing
- grizzling and berating builders
- limiting need to disabled and aging. it's for everyone
- engaging so exclusively with building industry. ensure other parties (health) put forward the economic position
- being divisive, retreating to entrenched and opposite positions
- stop apologizing
- stop preaching to the converted – broaden the audience
- using the language of "access"
- using discriminatory advertising images – images should reflect the whole community when promoting to prospective buyers (developers and real estate)
- stop accepting inaction from MPs re affordable, livable housing
- stop building houses that don't comply
- stop talking to the converted
- STOP MAKING IT A DISABILITY PROBLEM/INDIVIDUALS PROBLEM
- stereotyping
- bagging the building industry
- relying on LHA alone
- letting the message of "it's too expensive" to go unchallenged
- trusting self-regulation

- the economic imperatives beyond building costs (cost/benefit analysis for health and aging in place

Start doing
- actively lobby for regulation
- find champions with a good story
- Scott and Cam?
- consider incentives/levy
- strengthen LHA brand
- get leverage from the NDIS campaign
- work out an incremental approach to regulation
- hold forums in regional areas
- campaign MPs systematically
- be solution focused and positive with builders
- stressing the economic imperatives beyond building costs (cost/benefit analysis for health and aging in place
- engaging health professionals to lobby
- convincing home owners to make the economic investment in livable houses while they are working
- lobby at political level
- accessible is beautiful message
- public awareness campaign (including Australian story)
- magazine articles
- strategic communications (have different visual images for different segments of market)
- use volunteers to develop an action plan for influencing (ownership and accountability focus)
- develop broader partnerships
- market images in bite size chunks e.g. walk in show for all.
- start making it relevant to the whole community
- look to financial bodies and super funds to invest in visionary development of optimally designed housing stock and integrated infrastructure
- use our networks to influence politicians
- think beyond 2020
- you tube and social media that reach all of us
- change the language so it's really universal
- get local government to include LHDG in ordinances
- hang off the WHO age friendly cities work
- be involved in own house design and building as owner builder
- set up a peak body
- more transparency in government processes
- market good prototypes
- looks at points of influence and education in schools and universities
- let certifiers become accredited LHA assessors
- put proposal for change to ABCB to implement building elements into NCC?
- consider level of flexibility and tolerance over codes and standards